Review of International Studies (2011), 37, 1647–1669 © *2010 British International Studies Association*
doi:10.1017/S0260210510001075 *First published online 2 Sep 2010*

What can the absence of anarchism tell us about the history and purpose of International Relations?

ALEX PRICHARD*

Abstract. Anarchism does not feature in contemporary international relations (IR) as a discreet approach to world politics because until very recently it was antithetical to the traditional use-value of a discipline largely structured around the needs and intellectual demands of providing for the world's Foreign Offices and State Departments. This article tells part of the story of how this came to be so by revisiting the historiography of the discipline and an early debate between Harold Laski and Hans Morgenthau. What I will show here is that Morgenthau's Schmittian-informed theory of the nation state was diametrically opposed to Laski's Proudhon-informed pluralist state theory. Morgenthau's success and the triumph of Realism structured the subsequent evolution of the discipline. What was to characterise the early stages of this evolution was IR's professional and intellectual statism. The subsequent historiography of the discipline has also played a part in retrospectively keeping anarchism out. This article demonstrates how a return to this early debate and the historiography of the discipline opens up a little more room for anarchism in contemporary IR and suggests further avenues for research.

Alex Prichard is ESRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Bristol. He gained his PhD from Loughborough University in 2008 which will be published as *The International Political Theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A World Without Sovereigns* (Routledge, 2011). He is currently publishing a series of articles on the intersections between anarchism and IR. He is founder and convenor of the PSA Anarchist Studies Network and is co-editor of 'Contemporary Anarchist Studies', a new book series to be published by Continuum.

Today, our schools of rationality baulk at having their histories written, which is no doubt significant.[1]

Introduction

In this article I want to tell part of the story of the evolution of IR by reference to absence. I will show how something has come to be the way it is because it has

* Earlier drafts of this article were presented at the BISA annual conference at the University of Cambridge and the CRIPT workshop on International Political Theory at Aberystwyth University. I would like to thank participants at these event and also Luke Ashworth, Oliver Daddow, David Dyzenhaus, Ana Juncos, George Lawson, Tim Moonen, Bill Scheuerman and Casper Sylvest, and three anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. This article was finalised during an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Bristol, Grant code: PTA-026-27-2404.

[1] Michel Foucault, 'Politics and Reason', in Lawrence D. Kritzman, (ed.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 83.

consistently ignored and marginalised something else, something that did not fit the traditional self-image or practical use-value of the discipline. The 'other' in this case is the political philosophy of anarchism and the grand, hegemonic self is IR. Mainstream IR has traditionally been a statist beast because anti-statism has, until rather recently, been anathema to the practical reason of IR theorists and the would-be mandarins of the discipline. Accounting for the absence of anarchism, I will argue, tells us much about this history and traditional purpose of IR because accounting for this absence brings evidence to light that illustrates the political reasons why mainstream IR has traditionally been ontologically and normatively statist. Uncontroversial in itself, this claim nevertheless suggests that there is plenty of room for anarchism in the contemporary discipline.

What I will show is that anarchism played a modest but challenging part in the intellectual debates of the inter-war and post-war period, but that this contribution has been widely ignored and the subsequent historiography of the discipline has obscured it from view. While there is a large and growing body of literature that has gone a long way towards correcting the misleading caricatures of the inter-war period,[2] the place of anarchism in these debates remains under-appreciated. There are quite clear political, historical and methodological reasons for this, reasons I will attempt to untangle here. Thus, my aim in this article is to contribute to this historiographical scholarship by uncovering another silenced tradition of thought that once played some role at least in forming the contemporary discipline, account for its absence and attempt to reconstruct a long-forgotten debate so as to bring anarchism and IR back together once again.

This article also contributes to scholarship that is developing a specifically anarchist approach to world politics.[3] What is missing in this literature is a sense of historical antecedent. My aim here is thus to discuss one early attempt so that lessons might be learned and historical depth given to broad current debates. In

[2] Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations', *International Relations*, 61 (2002), pp. 33–51; Lucien Ashworth, 'Where Are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), pp. 291–308; Duncan Bell, 'International Relations: The dawn of a historiographical turn?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3 (2001), pp. 115–26; Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David Long and Peter Wilson, *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); David Long and Brian C. Schmidt, *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005); Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998); Peter Wilson, 'The Myth of the First Great Debate', *Review of International Studies*, 24:5 (1998), pp. 1–16; Brian C. Schmidt, 'Anarchy, World Politics and the Birth of a Discipline: American International Relations, Pluralist Theory and the Myth of Interwar Idealism', *International Relations*, 16 (2002), pp. 9–31.

[3] R. Osborn, 'Noam Chomsky and the Realist Tradition', *Review of International Studies*, 35 (2009), pp. 351–70; E. Herring and P. Robinson, '"Introduction" to Forum on Chomsky', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003), pp. 551–2; Richard Falk, 'Anarchism and World Order', in J. R. Pennock and J. Chapman (eds), *Nomos XIX: Anarchism* (New York, New York University Press 1979), pp. 63–87; Alex Prichard, 'Justice, Order and Anarchy: The International Political Theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865)', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35 (2007), pp. 623–45; Alex Prichard, 'Deepening Anarchism: International Relations and the Anarchist Ideal', *Anarchist Studies*, (forthcoming); Scott Turner, 'Global Civil Society, Anarchy and Governance: Assessing an Emerging Paradigm', *Journal of Peace Research*, 35 (1998), pp. 25–42; Thomas Weiss, 'The Tradition of Philosophical Anarchism and Future Directions in World Policy', *Journal of Peace Research*, 12 (1975), pp. 1–17.

this article I will show how Proudhon's ideas about the ontology of political order and the motors of world politics informed the ideas of the most famous inter-war pluralist, Harold Laski, professor of government at the LSE between 1926 and 1950, member of the Executive Committee of the British Labour party from 1936 and chair of the Labour party from 1945.[4] Laski's pluralism, developed in his first works, *Authority in the Modern State* (1919), *The Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays* (1921), and *Liberty in the Modern State* (1929), can be shown to have openly Proudhonist features, both ontologically and politically.[5]

These works link to the origins of disciplinary IR through the almost symmetrical critiques of Laski and Proudhon's ideas advanced by Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau. It was the anarchistic and anti-statist aspect of Laski's work that was to disgust the German fascist Carl Schmitt, the 'Streicher of the legal profession' as Morgenthau called him,[6] who by criticising a prominent British Jewish socialist in numerous publications, undoubtedly felt he was defending the political and moral integrity of the totalitarian Third Reich. Schmitt had criticised Laski's work elsewhere prior to this,[7] but his definitive statement of his position on Laski's pluralism can be found in his essay 'Ethic of State and Pluralistic State'.[8] What is most striking for our purposes is that it can be shown that Morgenthau deployed similar Schmittian arguments against Laski for quite different reasons. As I will show, Morgenthau had three aims. The first was to buttress the moral integrity of the US state so that nothing like the Third Reich would ever go unchallenged by a major state again; the second was to defend the integrity of the US state against the post-War Stalinist threat; and finally, the ethic of state central to Morgenthau's work was also arguably central to the possibility of an autonomous discipline of IR. The 'national interest', a vacuous term at the best of times, would be even more so in a pluralist state. Schmitt and Morgenthau both sought to rebuild the moral foundations of the state in two quite distinct political contexts and for quite different purposes, but both developed a critique of Laski's anarchistic inclinations to make their arguments. I will show that it is because they (perhaps wilfully) misunderstood or twisted Proudhon *and* Laski's arguments to

[4] I will be using the term pluralism exclusively as used by the predominantly English left-pluralists of the mid-to-late 20th century. See, for example, F. M. Barnard and R. Vernon, 'Pluralism, Participation, and Politics: Reflections on the Intermediate Group', *Political Theory*, 3 (1975), pp. 180–97; Paul Hirst, *From Statism to Pluralism: Democracy, Civil Society and Global Politics* (London: UCL Press, 1997); Richard Little, 'The Growing Relevance of Pluralism?', in Ken Booth, Steve Smith and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 66–86; C. Mouffe (ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992); Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, chap. 5; Casper Sylvest, 'Beyond the State? Pluralism and Internationalism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *International Relations*, 21 (2002), pp. 67–85.

[5] H. Laski, *Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921); H. Laski, *Communism* (London: Butterworth, 1926); H. Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935); H. Laski, *Liberty in the Modern State* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947); H. J. Laski, *Studies in the problem of sovereignty* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1917); H. J. Laski, *Authority in the Modern State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919).

[6] Cited in William E. Scheuerman, *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p. 226.

[7] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 41–5.

[8] Carl Schmitt, 'Ethic of State and Pluralistic State', trans. David Dyzenhaus, in C. Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 195–208. First published in *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles 1923–1939* (*Positions and Concepts in the Fight against Weimar, Geneva, Versailles, 1923–1939*) in 1940.

their own ends that this debate is far from closed. The essay I will discuss here is 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought: Harold Laski', first published two years after the first edition of *Politics Among Nations*, in *Common Cause*, March 1950, the month Laski died, and republished in a collection of essays titled *The Restoration of American Politics* in 1958.[9]

The article proceeds in the following manner. I begin by briefly discussing how the historiography of the discipline goes a long way to obscuring anarchism from view. Here I will argue two things. First I will make an explanatory and empirical claim regarding the absence of anarchist thought in contemporary IR. I will argue that despite the existence of a plethora of anarchist texts which engage squarely with 'the international' broadly conceived, the 'self-images of the discipline', as Steve Smith put it,[10] have evolved in such a way that either anarchism has implicitly been seen to be surplus to intellectual and political requirement, or has been deliberately obscured from view. The secondary, emperical claim I make is that post-War IR has evolved from a statist nucleus, through a series of debates which have been constructed, post-hoc, to explain what IR is for and to reaffirm the centrality of this statist core and the professional responsibilities which come with defending the state. My political aim is to challenge that core and contribute to contemporary post-statist approaches to IR,[11] by bringing to light some of their historical and disciplinary antecedents. In the second part of the article I begin by summarising Proudhon's approach to federalism and world politics, I then link it to Laski's work and then illustrate how both Carl Schmidt and Hans Morgenthau repeat equally mistaken arguments against Laski's work in order to substantiate their own ideological positions.[12] The aim here is to give a detailed analysis of how anarchism was first marginalised in IR. In the conclusion I set out where anarchist thought might usefully contribute to IR theory. I suggest that anarchist thinking can help contribute to the work of those who are challenging traditional understandings of who and what IR is for and help develop state theory, in IR.

The historiography of silence

The absence of anarchism cannot be explained by reference to any debate or to anything intrinsically weak or factually inaccurate in the ideological morphology of

[9] Hans J. Morgenthau, 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought: Harold Laski', in H. J. Morgenthau (ed.), *The Restoration of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Cf. Hans. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Brief ed.) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993). Another long-forgotten 'debate' (though, again, Carr had no interlocutors) is the one between Carr and the nineteenth century anarchists. See, E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (London: Macmillan, 1937); E. H. Carr, 'Proudhon: The Robinson Crusoe of Socialism', in E. H. Carr (ed.), *Studies in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 38–55.

[10] Steve Smith, 'The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations', in Steve Smith and Ken Booth (eds), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 1–37.

[11] See, for example, R. K. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', *Millennium*, 17 (1988), pp. 227–62; A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical foundations of a Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

[12] See, for example, Harmut Behr and Amelia Heath, 'Misreading in IR Theory and Ideology Critique: Morgenthau, Waltz and neo-realism', *Review of International Studies*, 35 (2009), pp. 327–49.

anarchism as a tradition in the history of political thought.[13] To claim such would involve the use of evidence, arguments and counter-arguments, and these do not exist in IR. If we cannot look here for our account of the absence of anarchism, then where ought we to look? Perhaps one of the most informative places to look is the historiography of the discipline. Historiography is the study and practice of history-writing. Because it involves unpacking empirical narratives, it is also itself history-(re)writing. Traditional histories are engaged with by historiographers less to tell us about the substantive object of study and more to tell us about the way in which the object of study has traditionally been approached and narrated. This is a necessary first step of any history-writing and, when done well, usually has huge implications for common-sense knowledge about the world. We might thus argue that historiography is the contextualising and de-naturalising of common sense. Its effect has usually been to deflate grandiose claims to universal knowledge or perspectives; claims to have provided the best or final interpretations of events, or to deflate Whig history, and also to uncover the history writers' political, normative and analytical biases.[14]

When it comes to anarchism and IR, the traditional statist historiography of IR has obscured rather than enlightened. In keeping with statist historiography in the discipline of history itself, the needs and ideological foundations of the state are what were usually defended.[15] And yet when IR went through the epistemological turn in the 90s, the empirical history upon which the original narratives were based were largely left unchallenged. Since then a huge literature has emerged that seeks to re-build these early debates and show how the statist core of the discipline then (as now) is far from ideologically neutral.

Let us begin with Martin Wight's early piece 'Why is there no international theory' which has been an important teaching tool for decades.[16] What is significant is less the bifurcation he makes between domestic and international, but the claims he makes to substantiate this division and the political project that underpins it. In many ways it is typical of much of the historiographical literature in this regard. As is widely known, Wight argued that the aim of political theory is to ascertain the best internal make-up of a state in order to build and protect the good life. International theory, by contrast, did not exist in the pre-1945 era for two main reasons. First, because no such comparable project of building and defending the good life is possible in the lawless realm of world politics. This stated fact provides Wight with the best explanation for why no one had until then produced any international theory. The second reason why normative international theory is impossible is because all recent attempts at overcoming the anarchy of the

[13] On ideology, see for example, Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: a conceptual approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[14] A. Budd, *The modern historiography reader: Western sources* (London: Routledge, 2009); Peter Lambert and P. R. Schofield (eds), *Making history: an introduction to the history and practices of a discipline* (London: Routledge, 2004); Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[15] The concerns of the state have been at the heart of the rise of modern history-writing. It was only with the rise of socialism in the nineteenth century that the people, as opposed to the army, 'great men' or governments, became a legitimate and explicit political subject for the discipline. For an introduction to these debates see for example, Lambert and Schofield (eds), *Making History*, part II.

[16] Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966).

international system, by seeking to establish a world state or global *imperium*, have failed. Moreover, none seems either desirable or likely for good, now fairly intuitive reasons. International theory must therefore, he argues, be directed at devising the means of regulating the international system as it exists in perpetuity.

It goes without saying that both claims are hugely contentious if not just downright wrong. Proudhon's voluminous writings on world politics are a case in point. Not only did he reject the bifurcation of domestic and international, he would almost certainly have rejected the ethical centrality of the state to the intellectual project now known as IR.[17] Wight's eschatological conservatism, a conservatism that posited the recurrence of war and anarchy until 'the death of death' at the theological end of history,[18] when history's purpose would be revealed to humans and this 'divine act of judgement [. . .] will bring it [history] to an end',[19] would also have been anathema to Proudhon's 'anti-theism'. Clearly if this is how one conceives of the history and purpose of IR, anarchism can have no place in the discipline.

Stanley Hoffmann's famous argument, set out in 'An American Social Science: International Relations', was empirically richer but perhaps equally misleading, it is also baffling in its omissions and cynically conservative.[20] Hoffmann claims IR to be an American social science for a number of now well-known reasons. First, Hoffmann repeats the prevailing assumption that international theory did not exist in the pre-1945 era. However, Hoffmann argues that rather than international theory being impossible at *any* time, as Wight had more or less argued, the rise of a science of IR was actually impossible in the pre-1945 era because there was no tradition of thinking about the international system conducive to *scientific modelling*. What were needed to bring this about were the writings of key individuals and the post-War dominance of the US in world affairs. The two texts which Hoffmann claims to have underpinned the new intellectual world order were Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis*, and Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*. Their writings and the political context in which they emerged fed into the US need for technical expertise to understand and manage a 'bi-polar world' overshadowed by the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction. This need was met predominantly in the US because of the proximity of ambitious IR theorists, including a number of key *émigrés*, Hoffmann included, to the one state both able and willing to pay for this technical expertise. Morgenthau's work in particular made it possible to develop a scientific approach to world politics, focusing analysis on the 'real' as opposed to the 'ideal' and the promotion of 'general propositions [. . .] grounded in history'.[21] Hoffmann is clear that their approaches were discipline-defining in an America that needed to 'justify a permanent and global involvement in world

[17] For a summary of Proudhon's views on international politics see, for example, Prichard, 'Justice Order and Anarchy'; Prichard, 'Deepening Anarchism'; Cf. Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993), chap. 4.

[18] Martin Wight, 'Why is There No International Theory?', p. 34.

[19] Cited in Timothy Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Houndmills: Macmillan, in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1998), p. 53.

[20] Stanley Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science: International Relations', [1977] in Andrew Linklater (ed.), *International Relations: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 77–98.

[21] Hoffmann, 'American Social Science', p. 80.

affairs'.[22] Again, anarchism can have no place here and what I will discuss in the following section is whether Morgenthau's empirical and theoretical claims were accurate.

While the technical maintenance of a bipolar world was a priority to which the vast majority of analysis in IR devoted itself, it was nevertheless deeply upsetting for Hoffmann. Moreover, it is not widely appreciated that Hoffmann was first and foremost a historian of France and a political historian of European international affairs. As his essay 'The Areal Division of Power in the Writings of French Political Thinkers', and the acknowledgements of Alan Ritter's *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* make clear, he was also fully acquainted with Proudhon's thought and its context.[23] Proudhon's thinking is however conspicuous by its absence in Hoffmann's essay despite championing the political sociology of Raymond Aron and his 'monumental *Peace and War*',[24] which is complementary of Proudhon's work,[25] and in many ways mirrored Proudhon's sociological, ethical and 'scientific' approach that claimed to be able to accord 'the international' analytical autonomy.[26] Moreover, Proudhon was anti-positivist, and his anarchist thought, or those who drew on it faithfully, would in no way get caught up in those 'precious relays' between the academy and Washington that so depressed Hoffmann.[27] So why not, at the very least, reference the existence of Proudhon's works? Bemoaning an omission is one thing, but what are the implications of this move for our understanding of what IR *is for*? Like Wight, Hoffmann believed bipolar great power politics needed managing and there is little in anarchism that would be of use in this task.

Things continued in this vein for the following twenty years or so, and then in the mid-1990s, IR had something of an epistemological turn. The emergence of Frankfurt School critical theory, feminist and poststructuralist approaches to IR, posed serious challenges to the traditional realist and neo-realist foundations of the discipline. While the epistemological challenge to the mainstream presented by the critics cannot be underestimated, the empirical reconstruction of the discipline took longer to emerge. This was most problematic, for in leaving the historical narrative intact and focusing mainly on method, history was ceded to the realists. In many respects, Booth and Smith's *International Relations Theory Today* marked this watershed in IR theory and turning to Steve Smith's introductory chapter 'The Self-Images of the discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory' presents us with the evidence of how anarchism was once again inadvertently marginalised.[28]

Smith's purpose in his essay was to uncover the way in which IR's traditional 'self-images', or how the genealogy of debates about who and what IR is for, has

[22] Ibid., pp. 82, 84.
[23] Stanley Hoffmann, 'The Areal Division of Powers in the Writings of French Political Thinkers', in A. Maas (ed.), *Area and Power* (Glencoe: University of Illinois Press, 1959); Alan Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. v.
[24] Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science', p. 81.
[25] Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 600–10.
[26] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif et de la Nécessité de Reconstituer le Parti de la Révolution* (includes) *Si les Traités de 1815 ont Cessé d'Exister. Oeuvres Complètes De P-J Proudhon*, Vol. VIII (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, no date provided c. 1900).
[27] Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science', p. 87.
[28] Smith, 'The Self-Images of a Discipline'.

served to discipline how IR is done, what counts as normal and permissible and what the implications of this disciplining might be for the praxis of world politics. Smith's focus was less on the silences and omissions or the substantive political implications of this disciplining, and more on the epistemological presuppositions that fuelled them. By taking this approach Smith posed a series of challenges to the disciplinary mainstream and pushed forward a critical agenda that questioned, for example, the bifurcation of domestic and international, the presupposition that a non-normative IR theory was possible, that IR had in fact been constructed around a series of so-called 'Great Debates' and so forth. But it was left to others to fill in the empirical detail.

Typical of this literature, this methodologically-driven critique of the discipline as it stood in the mid-nineties, served little to uncover the actual problems and paradoxes of pre-1945 IR theory or replace the mythological narrative of IR's origins with a more empirically rich one. History itself was somehow tainted, or so it seemed. Rejecting the self-images of the discipline on epistemological grounds did nothing to redress the empirical gap that emerged: if there were no Great or Inter-paradigm Debates, if what we then knew of IR's history was a discursive sleight of hand, what were all of these things actually concealing?

In his critique of Steve Smith's chapter, (the now Lord) William Wallace argued that IR ought to eschew the 'scholastic', theory-based discipline Smith was held to be championing, and return to the empirical world and the 'messy business of democratic politics'. Indeed, Wallace dismissed Smith's work as 'self indulgent' theory.[29] However, what we as IR theorists were supposed to be doing instead was fairly conventional – the analysis of democratic politics. For Wallace, while the early founders of the discipline had sought to confront the 'irrationalism and historicism of Fascism, Nazism and Leninism', contemporary theorists had simply backed away from 'critical engagement with the difficult compromises of democratic politics'.[30] Which is to say the *status quo ante*. As Smith and Booth both argued in their responses, the tendency to return to statist solutions to statist problems will perpetuate rather than ameliorate these state-formed problems.[31] That said, it was another ten years before Booth drew his readers attention to Richard Falk's essay 'Anarchism and World Order'[32] as a viable alternative to conventional mind-sets and remarked (in a footnote) that it was 'among the most thought provoking (and short) articles in the field, yet never appears in standard collections'.[33] This observation begs the central question of this article.

Despite Wallace's pleas against the epistemological turn, it thoroughly shaped subsequent critical investigation in IR in the late nineties. Unfortunately, the tendency towards discourse-based methods also shaped historical investigation. As

[29] W. Wallace, 'Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 304, 310.
[30] Ibid., pp. 308, 309.
[31] Steve Smith, 'Power and truth: a reply to William Wallace', *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 507–16; Ken Booth, 'Discussion: A Reply to Wallace', *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 371–7; Cf. Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organised Crime', in P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169–91.
[32] Falk, 'Anarchism and World Order'.
[33] Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 62, n. 93.

a direct response to Smith's call for research, Brian Schmidt and Tim Dunne, amongst others, sought to recover the history of the formation of the discipline from the myths that had characterised it to date.[34] Both took a discursive approach to the history of ideas which to a large degree removed the background international and social context from their purview. That said both texts seemed to characterise a new sensitivity to the challenges faced by IR theorists wanting to know what lay behind the myths Smith had so eloquently described.

For Schmidt, what defined IR over the ages was an intellectual and political concern with anarchy – anarchy between sovereign states, anarchy within states which are not sovereign and anarchy in areas of the world that had not yet been 'civilised'. In each case the mainstream answer to the question of anarchy was the state and the unfortunate side-effect of the creation of yet another anarchy beyond or above it. The early protagonists in this academic debate were key architects of US foreign policy. These included individuals such as Francis Lieber, who developed a military science for President Lincoln during the Civil War;[35] Herbert Baxter Adams and his Hegelian theory of the state, which was influenced by Heinrich von Treitschke and was hugely influential in early US political science; Adams' subsequent tutoring of Woodrow Wilson also being instructive in this regard.[36] Further examples abound,[37] the point being that, as Hoffmann argued, IR and political science developed in the English-speaking world with the requirements of the US state and the tried and tested ideas and techniques of the Prussian state, as well as the British Imperial state, at its heart. Of the critical voices, the English socialist pluralists Harold Laski and G. D. H Cole stand out, in Schmidt's analysis at least, as perhaps the lone radical and socialist voices in IR's 50-year pre-disciplinary period. Unfortunately, Schmidt's discursive rather than contextualist methodology precludes him from seeking out the anarchistic origins of their ideas and thus reinforces the impression that there was no wider tradition of anarchist thought that might contribute to IR, or that there was at the very least no established alternative to statism.

One might therefore argue, with some justification, that where Wight and Hoffmann suggested that we ought to manage the system in perpetuity, and Wallace would have the discipline to retain an engaged but healthy distance from the state, Schmidt shows us the imperialistic and murderous history of the system we are supposed to maintain, manage or remain relatively detached from. While Steve Smith and others have argued for a more critical approach, none have seen the sense in turning to anarchism. It is also deeply ironic that despite being quintessentially concerned with anarchy and a world without sovereigns, the anarchists are never canvassed for their opinions by those working on the 'political discourse of anarchy'.

[34] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*; Dunne, *Inventing International Society*. Considerations of space make it impossible to do justice to Dunne's work here. In his perceptive review Duncan Bell makes the comment that '[f]or a set of scholars usually regarded as amongst the most historically astute in the field of IR, the English School's sloppy attitude to the history of ideas is all the more intriguing'. Bell, 'International Relations', p. 123.

[35] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, p. 49; David W. Clinton, *Tocqueville, Lieber, and Bagehot: Liberalism Confronts the World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

[36] Ibid., p. 60.

[37] Ibid., pp. 92–3, 127, 129, 130.

Anarchism, pluralism and totalitarianism in inter-war IR

Developing Brian Schmidt's research, I will now turn to the anarchist legacy in pluralist approaches in early IR to try and show two things: how anarchist thought was marginalised and why. Returning to the early debates in IR, re-narrating this formative part of IR's disciplinary past, also has the twin benefit of reuniting anarchism with IR (on terms other than those that might be set by today's gatekeepers)[38] and of re-narrating the discipline's past to do so. What follows – therefore, is a more detailed case study of the intellectual foundations of IR.

Broadly speaking, the inter-war pluralists sought to defend a political ethic that respected and affirmed the relative autonomy of a whole host of social, political and economic cleavages, with the state but one of a multitude of units within a sort of new medieval order.[39] They believed that this pluralism, enmeshed with a firm commitment to economic democracy and strong international institutions, would pacify inter-state relations by restraining the state's scope for unilateral action. Most prominent amongst them, Harold Laski's thought has nevertheless traditionally been characterised as Marxist. There is undoubtedly truth in this, not least to say that it would have been Laski's Marxism that prompted him to see the promise of salvation for the working class in both the British Labour Party and Stalin's Russia. However, Laski's early political lineage is usually ignored while his anti-capitalism (rather than his Proudhonist anti-statism) becomes the key feature of his critique of world politics.[40] Laski's detractors, such as the McCarthy era anti-communist Herbert A. Dean, are less nervous to highlight his anarchistic sentiments and use Proudhon as a stick with which to beat him.[41]

Casper Sylvest also claimed that Laski 'converted to Marxism' in the 1920s, but this is, I think, a slight exaggeration.[42] Laski's Fabian background, his defence of the individual and of free speech and his anarchistic and socialist anti-Communism,[43] are anarchist in origin and as I will show the source here is Proudhon. Moreover, Laski was publically chastised for the seeming paradox of being a 'libertarian Marxist', while Alfred Zimmern saw his work as 'insidious syndicalism' in the late thirties and the *Times Literary Supplement* believed his work to be dangerous and worried about it anarchic implications. As Kramnick and Sheehan note, these examples are all 'consistent expressions of his overarching anti-statism', and anti-statism was not consistent with Marxism until after 1968.

[38] For an example of how feminism was asked to fit neatly into pre-existing research programmes see, Robert Keohane, 'International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 18 (1989), pp. 245–53; Cynthia Weber, 'Good Girls, Little Girls and Bad Girls: Male Paranoia in Robert Keohane's Critique of Feminist International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 23 (1994), pp. 337–49.

[39] That contemporary theorists of new medievalism, from Hedley Bull to Andrew Linklater and others ignore this set of historical antecedents is typical of a broad rejection of inter-war thinkers in IR. For a good survey of contemporary thinking on new medievalism, see Jörg Friedrichs, 'The Meaning of New Medievalism', *European Journal of International Relations*, 7 (2001), pp. 475–502.

[40] Peter Lamb, 'Harold Laski: Political Theorist of a World in Crisis', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 329–42; Peter Lamb, *Harold Laski: Problems of Democracy, the Sovereign State, and International Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[41] Herbert A. Deane, *The Political Ideas of Harold J. Laski* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 55.

[42] Sylvest, 'Beyond the State?'.

[43] Harold Laski, *Communism* (London: Butterworth, 1926).

In short, there is more to Laski's thought than meets the standard historical eye.[44]

Laski left Oxford with a double first in 1914. From here he took a short tenure at McGill University and then ended up at Harvard University. Within two years of arriving Laski had become a close friend and confidante of the Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, considered both then and now to be a 'liberal constructionist' and one of the fathers of the sociological tradition in jurisprudence.[45] Laski left the US with his name on Hoover's political subversives list (though qualification for a place on this list was not particularly demanding). Over the intervening years Holmes and Laski struck up a long and unusual friendship and their letters are a wonderful source of historical illumination. For example, on 29 April 1917, Laski writes the following to Holmes:

> *My Dear Justice:* A few words about a new enthusiasm. I have discovered Proudhon and I want you to share the joy. Really he is immense and he has all the virtues. He is clear-headed, far-sighted, anti-religious and his theory of the state satisfies all my anarchist prejudices. I got on to him in the course of searching out the origins of the decentralising ideas of today in France [. . .] He seems to me to have anticipated most of Karl Marx and to have said it better. He realises the necessity of safeguarding the rights of personality, and at the same time he is not afraid of collective action. He fits gloriously into the scheme of my new book and I'll make him a peg for a bundle of observations. But the main thing is that he will give you some pleasant hours this summer if you can be so tempted.[46]

It is likely that the book to which Laski was referring was *Authority in the Modern State* (1919). Interestingly, Justice Holmes does eventually read Proudhon and comments that 'Proudhon, who hates him [Marx] and who also seems to me not above criticism, I think had more insight – though Marx had the force that any man gets who rides even a limping theory of Evolution.'[47] Later he added that it was 'my impression [. . .] that Proudhon had profounder insights than his rival.'[48] This is striking not so much because it's a conversation between one of the most famous and established Supreme Court Judges and a junior lecturer in political science at Harvard, but because of how Laski delivered on his promise to use Proudhon's ideas as a 'peg'.

There are two main points to make about Proudhon's ideas in this context: the first analytical, the second sociological and historical.[49] The first key aspect of Proudhon's thought for our purposes is his political theory as he developed it in *the Principle of Federation*; the second is the way in which this theory informs his analysis of the ontology, emergence and transformation of political order. Turning to the first, Proudhon begins the work by developing an original theory of the political antinomy. He argues that all of political life can be thought of as a struggle between authority and liberty that has, over political time, evolved within and alongside evolving political institutions. These institutions, the state included,

[44] Isaak Kramnick and Barry Sheerman, *Harold Laski: A Life on the Left* (London, Hamilton 1993), p. 126.
[45] Harold Laski, 'The Political Philosophy of Mr Justice Holmes', *Yale Law Journal*, 40 (1931), pp. 689, 687.
[46] Mark De Wolfe Howe (ed.), *Holmes-Laski Letters: The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Harold J. Laski. 1916–1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 81–2.
[47] Ibid., p. 161.
[48] Ibid., p. 375.
[49] I have discussed Proudhon's international political theory in more detail elsewhere. See, for example, Prichard, 'Justice, Order and Anarchy'; Prichard, 'Deepening Anarchism'.

embody or attempt to resolve this antinomy in different ways. 'Regimes of authority', as Proudhon called them, include Monarchy and Patriarchy, while those of liberty include democracy and anarchy. All are ideal types 'fated to remain perpetual *desiderata*'[50] and yet attempts to realise pure form based on idealised thinking is all-too frequent. For Proudhon paternalism is closest to an actually existing ideal political order,[51] and while Monarchy was the first attempt to make it into a wider social and political order, all Monarchies must delegate authority. This process of delegation is intrinsic to the corruption of political principles and the encroachment of the real on the ideal – all political orders are therefore entropic. Thus, 'every real government is necessarily mixed',[52] and, contrary to Kant's ideas on the subject, there is no transcendental or ideal foundation to politics. More salient in this regard is force and our idealisation/rationalisation of it. As he stipulates quite clearly in *La Guerre et la Paix*, while the ideals of war may drive it, the reality undermines these ideals and reveals that force and the ideals we use to justify it, are the foundations of a stable society.[53] Thus, the question of the efficacy of sovereignty, or of any other political order we build to institutionalise force, is always an open one and the principles and structures of political order are not only intellectually or conceptually entropic, but turning to war and politics we can see that they are materially so also.

Like many before and since, Proudhon saw the global order as a system of institutionalised anarchy, a political order without sovereign, tenuously formalised in treaties. Here, states, characterised as 'natural groups' that are relatively autonomous from all the other plural 'natural groups' of society, conduct their inter-relations without a sovereign authority.[54] But for Proudhon there was no radical difference between the international and domestic when we consider states to be a 'natural group' in the context of Empire and imperialism. Revolutions, civil wars and the rise of new groups such as the industrial working class and bourgeoisie, suggested to Proudhon that society was in constant flux with systems of morality and wider intellectual frameworks such as religion or science, socialism or nationalism, bringing intellectual coherence to this anarchic order. In short, Proudhon suggests that anarchy is the ontological condition of all social life, of politics as such. There is no actual sovereign.

Secondly, as I hope is becoming clear, Proudhon had a non-reductionist sociological and historical method, one that united a pluralist and class-based view of society with an historical view of politics. We see this most clearly in his discussion of 'natural groups' and in *Principle of Federation* and in his extended discussion of the political travesties facing the Polish and Slavic revolutionaries in the nineteenth century. For Proudhon a two-class analysis was only appropriate for primitive society. In modern society the antagonism between the working class and

[50] P.-J. Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation and the Need to Reconstitute the Party of the Revolution*, trans. and intro. Richard Vernon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 12.
[51] Much can be said about this, but space does not allow me to do so here.
[52] Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, p. 23.
[53] Prichard, 'Justice, Order and Anarchy'.
[54] P.-J. Proudhon, *La Guerre et la Paix, recherches sur la principe et la constitution du droit des gens* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1861); P.-J. Proudhon, *La Fédération et l'Unité en Italie* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1862); P.-J. Proudhon, *Nouvelles Observations sur l'Unité Italienne* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865); P.-J. Proudhon, *France et Rhin* (Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Companie, 1868); Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif*.

the Imperial throne of Napoleon III was mediated by the bourgeoisie.[55] Political orders changed according to class alignments: royalty aligned with aristocracy results in constitutional monarchy; where the people align with royalty or aristocracy (and here Proudhon is imprecise in his terminology), 'the government will be an empire or autocratic democracy'.[56] In the case of Poland, the situation was relatively different. Here, Proudhon argued that there were but two classes: the nobility and the serfs.[57] The argument he makes here is that until an intermediary class appeared in Poland to act as a balancing force between the nobility and the serf population, Poland would always be the plaything of great powers. This feudal class structure in Poland was dire in its domestic and international consequences. As Proudhon argued, '[s]'il est un coin sur le globe ou jamais il ait été vrai de dire [...] que la propriété est le vol, c'est en Pologne.'[58] Territory was annexed by neighbouring Great Powers while the Polish nobility were simply parasitical upon the serf population. While Proudhon recognised that this situation was extreme he nevertheless argued that partition was in the Polish people's best interests since partition would at least dissuade outright control of the country by a single foreign power and might encourage the emergence of a middle class to mediate between nobility and serf and tie the upper classes to a conception of 'Poland' and, perhaps, emancipate the serfs. For Proudhon then, the economic system is central to understanding social conflict and social order.

Proudhon did not assume that society ought to have just two or three classes, but that the progressive pluralisation of the class structure and the disaggregation, rather than aggregation and centralisation, of political and economic power, would be more conducive to achieving social order and justice, and make the prize of total control by a domestic or foreign power so much harder to achieve.[59] His political ontology was such that the most obvious institutional form to bring unity to this natural social diversity was a loose 'principle of federation'. As with many of his neo-Kantian contemporaries, Proudhon called for a united states of Europe, but not states as they became within thirty years of his death, but states more like the cantons Switzerland. Proudhon called for a form of political order in which all the political and social cleavages of society, whether they are coterminous with some formal border or not, ought to be federated and inter-related, thereby bringing unity in diversity and ushering forth a quintessentially neo-medieval order.

The politics of Proudhon's position ought to be quite clear. Since the state and economy are manifestations of political power rather than natural right, they deserve allegiance only insofar as they can be shown to achieve the ends they profess to idealise. Should they fail to do so, and Proudhon argues that all concentrations of power will inevitably fail to justify themselves absolutely, then anarchy follows as both the ontological condition of all political community and as the framework for the future. Statism, being entropic, is utopian, while anarchism is a realistic political philosophy for a social order without sovereign

[55] Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, p. 24.
[56] Ibid., p. 24.
[57] For a fuller discussion of this see Proudhon, 'Si Les Traites de 1815 ont Cessé d'éxister'.
[58] '[i]f ever there was a corner of the world in which it is possible to say [...] that property is theft, it is in Poland.' Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif*, p. 302.
[59] For more on this see, for example, K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Prichard, 'The Ethical Foundations of Proudhon's Republican Anarchism'.

foundations. While the ideal of anarchy, or absolute 'self-government' as he calls it, will remain '*desiderata*', it has very real properties as an ideological framework for conceptualising human liberty and this ought, he argues, to drive politics. It is impossible to do justice to this fully here, but as I will show in the following section, the statist alternative to his ideas became a very real nightmare. The aim now is to show Laski's debt to Proudhon and the responses it provoked.

Laski's anti-capitalism has been well described by Lamb,[60] I want to focus on his politics and what we find is that it is Proudhon and not Marx which colours his ideas. By way of context, as Schmidt has more than adequately shown, central to Laski's thought was his critique of the German idealist theory of the state. First set out in 'The Pluralistic State' (1919), Laski attacks what he calls the 'monistic' and legalistic theory of the state. He argued that this theory substituted a short hand theory of sovereignty for actual empirical analysis. As far as Laski was concerned the state is only the expression of universal interest when it can be said to be just such an expression – at all other times it is not and is usually the expression of, as he put it, the interests of those who 'wield economic power'.[61] This argument only crudely reflects Proudhon's position, but the article under question also reflects more deeply on the lessons of federalism, particularly the US model of federalism, for our conception of statehood and sovereignty and it is here that Proudhon's ideas emerge most clearly.

America, Laski argues, forces us to think of federalism not only 'in the old spatial terms' but also in terms of 'function', of 'the government of the cotton industry' and of 'the civil service'.[62] Natural political cleavages suggest a pluralist theory of politics and society, which all 'require a sovereignty of their own'.[63] The emergence of the working class suggested 'a new movement for the conquest of self-government'.[64] He argued that 'where administrative organisation is responsive to the actual associations of men, there is greater chance not merely of efficiency but of freedom also.'[65] The political corollary of this theory is that states are thus placed 'on a moral parity with the acts of any other institution' and must be judged by the values they claim to uphold and by their actions, not *a priori*, and while Laski claims this does not lead to anarchy, it is certainly not that far from anarchism,[66] for if it can be shown that the state possesses less moral authority than any other institution, there lies an argument for its abandonment if it fails (and it has done many times).[67]

The remainder of the article is a treasure trove for those with post-statist inclinations, but to flesh out this anarchistic temperament in more detail it is worth turning to *Authority in the Modern State* and *Liberty in the Modern State*, the titles of which perhaps coincidently correspond to the central political antinomy of

[60] Lamb, *Harold Laski*.
[61] Harold Laski, 'The Pluralistic State', *The Philosophical Review*, 28, (1919), p. 566.
[62] Ibid., p. 570.
[63] Ibid., p. 569. This problematic use of sovereignty in this context was also typical of Proudhon's *Principle of Federation*.
[64] Ibid., p. 571.
[65] Ibid.
[66] It is interesting that while Proudhon is often referenced by Laski, he refuses to classify anarchism in anything more than crudely syndicalist or anti-authoritarian terms. Laski's faith in the modern state meant he was not an anarchist in any truly meaningful sense of the word, despite being deeply indebted to Proudhonist ideas. See Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, pp. 88, 114.
[67] Laski, 'The Pluralist State', p. 572.

Proudhon's classic text in federalist theory. In the former work, Laski turns to the question of anarchy early on. He argues that the state is not *a priori* an actor, nor can its actions be deemed morally good without the express (rather than the assumed) support of all people it is designed to represent. Since this is impossible in reality, and since all people at all times can, at least in principle, deny the moral authority of the state and act in any which way they like, the question of political order and authority is a sociological and historical, rather than a philosophical, one. But of course, what this also presupposes is that '[t]he possibility of anarchy is theoretically at every moment present'.[68] 'Every government is a *de facto* government except insofar as the rightness of its efforts makes it *de jure*'.[69] The principle of sovereignty might be a useful legal shorthand in some contexts, but it reflects the ambitions of states rather than the reality, since nothing is actually ever sovereign in the Bodinian or Hobbesian sense. We might therefore legitimately wonder whether it is sensible to structure the formal architecture of world politics around a useful short-hand.

This conception clearly radically alters the way in which we conceptualise political power. Moreover, it changes what a state must be. For Laski, as for Proudhon, the emergence of the working class and of other functional units, as well as the rejection of state sovereignty, meant the German idealist theory of the state was a fantasy. Pluralist state theory on the other hand

> [i]mplies a conception of society as basically federal in nature [. . .] the paramount nature of the state is *ipso facto* denied [. . . This] is to foreshadow a division, not of powers, but of power on the basis of functions. It is to picture a society in which authority is not hierarchical but coordinate. Nor is the basis of its definition in any sense a matter of *a priori* definition. It must change as social necessity may demand.[70]

Contrary to Lamb's assertion that 'Laski was not attracted to federal solutions',[71] what we find is that Laski's works are littered with federalist lines of argument and advocacy. Indeed, one might go further to argue that functional and administrative federalism is at the heart of Laksi's politics.[72] Whereas Proudhon had argued 'The twentieth century will open the age of federations, or else humanity will undergo another purgatory of a thousand years',[73] Laski believed that 'the federalist society towards which we are moving' was inevitable.[74] Moreover, Laski argued that the 'democratic society must reject the sovereign state as by definition inconsistent with democracy'[75] and 'that private ownership of the means of production are no longer compatible with democratic institutions.'[76] The federalist alternative was all he could see to the aggrandising state across Europe. In *The State in Theory and Practice* (1935) Laski goes so far as to argue that 'the sovereign state is incompatible with the establishment of an effective world order; yet every serious move which looks to the erosion of its sovereignty is checkmated at some pivotal

[68] Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, p. 30.
[69] Ibid., p. 58.
[70] Ibid., p. 74.
[71] Lamb, *Harold Laski*, p. 333.
[72] Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, p. 89.
[73] Richard Vernon, 'Introduction', in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, p. xiii.
[74] Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, p. 89.
[75] Ibid., p. 109.
[76] Laski, *Liberty in the Modern State*, p. 30.

point'.[77] Given the pressing problems of his time, which cannot have been any greater than our own impending ecological collapse, Laski was moved to argue that 'the sovereign state and civilisation have irreconcilable interests'.[78]

Moreover, not only the state, but the international system itself was also the expression of minority interests. Continuing a standard theme by now, Laski argued in his *Introduction to Politics* that states are not in any real sense sovereign, least of all new states emerging on to the international scene and finding their actions curtailed by a pre-existing body of international law,[79] but that also, because societies and states interact and cooperate, 'there is not, in the historic and technical sense, the possibility of a sovereign state.'[80] Laski also cautiously observed that 'we are at the beginning of a new epoch' where citizens can appeal to courts beyond their state, where international criminal courts could become common and despite the fact that progress in this regard is not inevitable, the progressive decentring of the state is an historical fact and one that ought, he thought, to be pushed forward.[81] Alongside this, Laski's uncompromising anti-capitalism illustrated clearly to his authors which direction he would like this anti-statism to have been pushed.

Schmitt: the fascist anti-pluralist

What I will show now is how Schmitt and Morgenthau twist and distort Laski and Proudhon's thought for their own political purposes and the consequences of these moves. In his essay 'Ethic of State and Pluralistic State', Carl Schmitt's aim was to defend the 'ethic of state' from the pluralists who would undermine its unity – most notably Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole. While what is clear about their work is their socialism, Schmitt chooses to ignore it completely. Instead Schmitt argued that the pluralist critique amounted to a new political theology and political muddle. The new theology comes from what Schmitt saw as the pluralist's need to appeal for a transcendent 'humanity' to justify their claims to override the state. He also observes, however, that any pluralist ethic must result in the liberal '"agnostic"state, the *stato agnostico* which fascist criticism disparages'.[82] Taking on Laski here, Schmitt claims that not only is this 'agnostic state' both impossible and undesirable. It is also philosophically and historically muddled. States cannot be the impartial arbiter of plural claims, nor was it ever such. Schmidt also argued that the pluralism Laski advances as a critique of the idealist theory of the state had to be based on medieval conceptions of political order, but here the transcendent and universalist order was religious and quite illiberal. Quite why this is significant is made clear when we understand Schmitt's position, not Laski's.[83]

[77] Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice*, p. 227.
[78] Ibid., p. 224.
[79] H. J. Laski, *An Introduction to Politics, new edition prepared by Martin Wight* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), pp. 88–90.
[80] Ibid., p. 91.
[81] Ibid., p. 99.
[82] Schmitt, 'Ethic of State', p. 198. The return to Schmitt by the left is lamentable.
[83] For a similar critique of Laski, see Sylvest, 'Beyond the State?'.

Schmitt claims that Laski is highly individualist in his civic ethic, relying on individual judgement too heavily, and that this too clashes with the notion of a transcendent or unified humanity that *must*, he claims (without much in the way of analysis), underpin his pluralist ethic.[84] Schmitt continues that the defence of humanity is simply theological: 'the name of humanity is no less absurd than the name of God', he argues, and then cites Proudhon in his *criticism* of Laski's cosmopolitan ethic: 'he who speaks of humanity seeks to deceive'.[85] Because of Laski's clear debt to Proudhon, this criticism is illustrative of the wilful misreadings Schmitt was willing to employ in support of his arguments. Furthermore, Schmitt's critique of the notion of humanity that he claims underlies Laski's work is an echo of his critique of Proudhon in *Political Theology*. Here Schmitt argues that,

> Every political idea in one way or another takes a position on the 'nature' of man and presupposes that he is either 'by nature good' or 'by nature evil'. This issue can only be clouded [. . .] but it cannot be evaded [. . .]. To the committed theistic anarchists, man is decisively good, and all evil is the result of theological thought and its derivatives, including all ideas concerning authority, state and government [. . .Proudhon's] antitheological anarchism would have to be derived consistently from the axiom of the good man.[86]

One might agree with the argument, but it is not based in fact. Indeed, Schmitt recognises as much with the qualifier 'would have to be', since no anarchist that lived through the nineteenth century believed that man was essentially good, and no one who had read Laski would believe this about his position either.[87] But Schmitt ties this critique of anarchism to his critique of liberalism and then both to Laski once more. Because, Schmitt argues, anarchists 'would have to' believe man to be good, their liberalism is characterised by their inability to take decisive political decisions that might undermine the presumed liberty of the other. Schmitt psychologises that this creates an existential anguish within the anarchist which ultimately and inevitably leads those like Bakunin who established secret revolutionary societies, he argues here, to the role of 'the dictator of the antidictatorship'.[88] This fear of the decision is mirrored in liberalism which, on the basis of reason and a faith in humanity, seeks the division of powers in order to undermine absolutism, and makes the 'king, a mere executive organ with his every act dependent on the consent of cabinet, thus removing once again that personal element'.[89] Schmitt argues that the liberal's faith in the division of powers, or the pluralists claim that there is no sovereignty, constitutes an overly optimistic faith in humanity rather than deep suspicion of the centralisation of power which would be a more accurate description. But for Schmitt this pluralisation would be unacceptable. Turning to de Maistre for guidance (as does Martin Wight at the

[84] Schmitt, 'Ethic of State', pp. 200–1.
[85] Ibid., p. 205. For another example of the muddle Schmitt's misleading use of Proudhon's critique of universalism has caused for IR theorists, see Richard Devetak, 'Between Kant and Pufendorf: Humanitarian Intervention, Statist Anti-Cosmopolitanism and Critical International Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 33 (2007), p. 157; David Chandler, 'The Revival of Carl Schmitt in International Relations: The Last Refuge of Critical Theorists?', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37 (2008), p. 33.
[86] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, pp. 56–7.
[87] For more myth-busting, see, for example, David Hartley, 'Communitarian Anarchism and Human Nature', *Anarchist Studies*, 3 (1995), pp. 145–64; David Morland, *Demanding the Impossible? Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism* (London: Cassell, 1997).
[88] Ibid., p. 66.
[89] Ibid., p. 60.

close of his essay above), he argues that all men are in fact evil. From this *a priori* presupposition, which by definition does not need to be supported by the judicious evaluation of available empirical evidence,[90] it was possible for Schmitt to defend the sovereign act 'as if it were infallible', and he then insisted that we accept that 'authority is good once it exists:"Any government is good once it is established [. . .] making a decision is more important than how a decision is made."'[91] Clearly we are some way from Laski's pluralism here.

Schmitt then accuses Laski of another classical liberal vice: a faith that reason can move us from the irrationality of statist politics to the rationality of a more liberal version. Given that no such universal rationality can be said to exist, a position Laski would probably agree with, Schmitt is led to defend a very specific form of unity. Schmitt defends an undifferentiated political unity so as to avoid the 'civil war' that would emerge should groups be able to decide amongst themselves how to order their affairs. This Hobbesian myth-building serves what Wolin has called the ethic of 'horror' that surfaces in all Schmitt's writings.[92] By pointing to man's malign nature and by denying the possibility of the pastiche of a liberal utopia, Schmitt buttressed his Manichean world view – one which must be resolved by power and authority. This ethic of state is developed through an existential fear of conflict, the protean need for stability and the ensuing vision, developed by Schmitt, that pluralism or the erosion of sovereignty and state power, in the context of the failure of the Weimar Republic, is the source of this chaos. This is the philosophic roots of fascism made stark. Schmitt argues that, '[o]nce the reality of social life renders the unity of the state problematic',

> an unbearable situation is created for each citizen of the state, for at the same time the normal situation falls away, together with the presupposition of every ethical and every legal norm [. . .] Then there comes into being, alongside the duty of state which resides in its subjection of ethical norms, and alongside the duties against the state, a duty of ethic of state of a completely different kind – the duty towards statehood.[93]

The duty towards continually building the state is the final solution of the problem of plurality. These are the roots of fascism set out in more or less plain English. It was surely lost on none of Schmitt's readers that Laski was also Jewish. It mattered not, it seems, that Schmitt refused to engage with Laski's arguments, and yet the state survived, and so it seems did Schmitt's work – both worrying facts in their own right.

Morgenthau's critique of Laski

Morgenthau was, of course, neither anti-Semitic nor a fascist. However, ironically perhaps, Morgenthau had conventionally liberal ideas about the power of law and

[90] Future work relating human nature to world politics might consider Marc Hauser's *Moral Minds: How Nature Designed Our Universal Sense of Right and Wrong* (New York: Ecco, 2006).
[91] Ibid., pp. 55–6.
[92] Richard Wolin, 'Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism and the Total State', *Theory and Society*, 19 (1990), pp. 389–416; Richard Wolin, 'Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary and the Aesthetics of Horror', *Political Theory*, 20 (1992), pp. 424–47.
[93] Schmitt, 'Ethic of State', pp. 207–8.

the possibility of progress during the Weimar republic, but veered towards a not-unique brand of liberal totalitarianism after the demise of fascism.[94] While Morgenthau was forced to flee the Nazis after his ideas had influenced Schmitt's, it was not until he arrived in America that the influence worked the other way.[95] As many have argued, this influence was also central to his theory of international politics. What I will now show is how Schmitt and Morgenthau developed a parallel critique of (a mythological) anarchism, and what this implies for our common sense understanding of who and what IR is for.

Hans Morgenthau's article on Harold Laski, 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought: Harold Laski' was first published in March 1950 – unfortunately the month Laski passed away. While references to Laski in the article suggest he was not aware of his recent death, the paper nevertheless reads as something of a grim obituary to a brand of inter-war socialist liberalism, in the context of the rise of 'realism' and a widespread fear of the 'un-American' red-menace. Of central concern to scholars of IR is that Morgenthau's conception of the national interest, a concept so central to his *Politics Among Nations*, was predicated on a Schmittian conception of the state. A pluralist state, pulling in de-centralised directions with no sovereign point of authority, would be far harder to represent internationally than one in which we all marched to the same drum beat. In this sense, this debate is epochal in a number of significant ways for IR theory. That 'realism' should take this particularly statist direction was due in no small part to the social and intellectual context in which it developed and to the critique of an anarchistic political theory.

Morgenthau states his view of Laski quite bluntly. In the opening paragraph he argues: 'Professor Laski, the most brilliant, erudite, and prolific exponent of the last stage of liberalism, exemplifies the philosophic insufficiency and political confusion of liberal thought.'[96] The question is, how does Morgenthau understand liberalism and how does he think Laski fails as a liberal? Despite recognising that Laski's work contains persuasive criticisms of both sovereignty and private property, Morgenthau claims that 'the philosophic position of Laski is that of classic liberalism. Professors Hayek and Mises can hardly have found fault with it.'[97] This is not only confusing but categorically incorrect. Interestingly, Morgenthau makes exactly the same argument against Proudhon's thought in the few lines of engagement with it in *Politics Among Nations*. Here Morgenthau argues that Proudhon, like his contemporaries Cobden and Bright, was 'convinced that the removal of trade barriers was the only condition for the establishment of permanent harmony among nations, and might even lead to the disappearance of

[94] See, Jan Willem Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism: Hans Morgenthau's German Years', in Benjamin Frankel (ed.), *Roots of Realism* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 283–313. First published in *Security Studies*, 5 (1995), pp. 283–313.

[95] William Scheuerman has shown that Schmitt took Morgenthau's main critique of *The Concept of the Political* and revised subsequent editions accordingly, without referencing the source of his revised ideas. This is a strange intellectual relationship indeed, and one that has been widely written on. See Scheuerman, *Carl Schmitt*, chap. 9. See also, William E. Scheuerman, 'Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond', in Michael C. Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), pp. 62–92.

[96] Morgenthau, 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought', p. 29.

[97] Ibid.

international politics altogether.'[98] As such, Proudhon becomes a classic liberal at heart and thus brings upon himself all the opprobrium heaped upon them by the so-called realists. Laski and Proudhon's comparable *socialist* anti-statism simply does not figure in his analysis, despite this being the undisputable core of their arguments.

Perhaps then more confusingly still, Morgenthau then immediately goes on to link classical liberalism and Laski explicitly to anarchism. Beginning by making reference to the perpetual antinomy at the heart of politics, 'the struggle between Liberty and Authority', Morgenthau then reiterates a position made famous since by Robert Paul Wolff[99] that 'a consistent liberalism leads to anarchism. Laski recognises that connection, too, and approves of it'. Morgenthau, however, is diametrically opposed to this, arguing that this rational political personality, through which liberty would have to be realised, is 'impossible' in the empirical sense, and undesirable in the philosophical sense since it would undermine that 'political authority [. . .] founded upon a consensus of all or at least of the majority, that is upon shared moral and political convictions'. Morgenthau continues in truly Rousseauean, if not Schmittian vein, arguing:

> Such consensus may be the product of a common religion, a secular tradition, the national mores or it may be instilled in the reluctant citizens with fire and sword. Without it there can be no state and no government; for without it there can be no political authority accepted at least by the majority as legitimate, nor that voluntary obedience which the author so rightly stresses. Here again, the conclusion from the premise is anarchy.[100]

Laski was quite clear and stated repeatedly that anarchy was not his objective, and so why Morgenthau chose to ignore this can only be inferred from his wider argument. Political happiness, for it to be political at all, cannot be open to debate, but must be decided by the state. The alternative is 'the accident of implicit valuations'[101] and, as far as Morgenthau and Schmitt would see it, anarchy again.

Morgenthau then repeats Schmitt's argument that one of the defining features of Laski's thought is his faith in reason and its ability to adequately mediate between competing claims to power. Morgenthau claimed that Laski was naive to think that 'reason in the abstract' can solve actually existing social conflicts without recourse to some un-rational, that is, protean political philosophy. This position is also reminiscent of Morgenthau's criticism of what he saw to be Proudhon's misguided attempt to become the first scientist of the international,[102] but he seems to ignore the centrality of history of sociology, of class analysis and of a pluralist social ontology to Proudhon and Laski's thought, choosing instead to presume both to be quintessentially liberal rationalists.

Things become less clear when Morgenthau takes on Laski's analysis of the emergence of fascism. Laski's analysis, Morgenthau contends, is 'cliché Marxism', in that it puts capitalism at the heart of the emergence of fascism rather than the 'pseudo-religious fanaticism with the worship of violence for its own sake', which Morgenthau isolates in classically (if not clichéd) Weberian fashion.[103] Morgenthau

[98] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 35.
[99] Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998).
[100] Morgenthau, 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought', p. 31.
[101] Ibid., p. 32.
[102] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 42.
[103] Morgenthau, 'The Corruption of Liberal Thought', p. 33.

argues that what the rise of fascism shows us is the bankruptcy of liberal thought – not that fascism has triumphed, but that the principles and postulates of liberalism simply cannot counter it. By way of comparison, Morgenthau takes Laski's post-war ambivalence regarding Stalin's Soviet experiment as further evidence of the folly of *liberalism*, rather than of Marxism, and here the tenor of the article verges on the hysterical. As the title of the collection of the essays from which this critique of Laski is drawn suggests, *The Restoration of American Politics* is precisely what Morgenthau was endeavouring to achieve and *Politics Among Nations* and his critique of Laski as part of a wider intellectual and political project to buttress US power. Anarchism can have no place here. But surely, if anarchism and pluralism can teach us anything at all, and here Morgenthau's analysis does a huge disservice to Laski's thought, it is that the homogenisation of political community and centralisation of political power are precisely the problem rather than the solution.[104]

Finally, Morgenthau then makes the interesting and typically realist argument against Laski's anarchistic leanings by pointing out that his ideal-typical pluralist society operates in two fundamentally utopian ways. Anarchism, he argues, cannot be both an ideal solution to the problem of liberty and authority and a yardstick by which to measure actually existing political communities: 'If the author is inconsistent but is quite naturally moved by strong personal preferences, as Laski is, he will measure some political systems by the ideal, others by the attainable, and thus obtain the political conclusions that he prefers to obtain.'[105] This is a good point, however, on inspection, Morgenthau's objection equally to his own so-called 'realism'. Realism was both a conservative vision and an ethical yardstick.[106]

Morgenthau's debt to Schmitt and his critique of Laski performed a central heuristic role in his political and ontological construction of the world into competing and more or less homogenous *nations*. Consider the place of the national interest in Morgenthau's thought and at once we understand that for such an interest to exist, let alone be actualised, a more or less homogenous state, all pulling in the same direction is the minimum pre-requisite; '[a]ny segment of the population which feels itself permanently deprived of its rights and of full participation in the life of the nation will tend to have a lower national morale and be less"patriotic"'. The challenge must be to integrate all divergent segments of the population. But ought this to be done by homogenising their interests or by disaggregating the state? While Morgenthau recognises that national power is correspondingly reduced and 'foreign policy will always be precarious' to the degree that a population is fragmented, national unity must be the goal.[107] It is in this context that we must read his defence of totalitarianism, since as Morgenthau recognised, the totalitarian state was able to bridge the gap in 'identification' between people and government. But Morgenthau argues that '[w]hat totalitarianism can achieve only by force, fraud, and deification of the state, democracy

[104] Indeed, recent critical scholarship is taking up where Proudhon and Laski left off by showing what the centralisation of power has meant for the possibility of human freedom in the twentieth century. The central text in this regard is Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*.
[105] Ibid., p. 32.
[106] Piki Ish-Shalom, 'The Triptych of Realism, Elitism and Conservatism', *International Studies Review*, 8 (2006), pp. 441–68.
[107] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 152.

must try to accomplish through the free interplay of popular forces, guided by a wise and responsible government.'[108] Religion, sport and cultural activities are the principal means to realise this duty towards statehood, much as was the development of a sense of a shared fate through economic integration. This common identification is central to the personification of the nation and the ability to endow it with moral agency and to be able to speak of the national interest convincingly. In the absence of this common identification, indeed, if we were to adopt a pluralist state theory, what would the implications be for international politics and IR? It is Proudhon and Laski's answers to this question that Morgenthau and Schmitt so radically distorted.

Conclusion

Over the course of this article I have given an account of some of the core reasons for the absence of anarchism in contemporary IR and have done so by giving contextualised re-readings of some key texts from the formative years of the discipline. The account I have given illustrates that IR was founded as a discourse *for* states. In the main, the largely realist-dominated discipline was conservative in what it envisaged for the future, the way it narrated its past and the options so-called realists saw in the present. At each turn statism was at the core of the collective reason of the discipline. It is inconsequential that contemporary IR displays more pluralism and diversity than it did during the 1950s and 1960s and that since this time anti-statism has become standard fare in IR. This fact still begs the question this article has sought to answer. Why is there no anarchism in a discipline Brian Schmidt dubbed 'the political discourse of anarchy', and what can answering this question tell us about the history and purpose of IR? The answers are no doubt more complex than the account I have given here, but I hope this article contributes to the growing body of literature that continues to uncover the hidden history of the discipline and shows how absence, disciplining and politics shape what it is to know what IR is about, who it is for and what it is for. My answers in this context have revolved around the totalitarian roots of realism – and thus by extension post-war IR – and the incompatibility of anarchism to the project of rebuilding states and fighting the Cold War during that period. Because this critique of anarchistic elements within early IR was flawed, there is an urgent need to recover what was lost and consider the implications of marginalising anarchist thought. To turn to anarchism would raise questions regarding what and who IR is for once again. While this is not the place to explore these questions in detail, it is clear that the analysis I have given would suggest some avenues for further research.

First of all, it seems quite clear that anarchism has contributions to make at the level of state theory in IR. This would reconnect IR with its origins. During the formative years of the discipline, 'issues associated with international relations were addressed within the framework provided by the theory of the state. Rather than a sharp divergence between the domestic and the international realms, there was a

[108] Ibid., p. 154.

fundamental convergence'.[109] Indeed, seeing states as groups of people (not to be confused with society) interrelated with other groups in complex social matrices would suggest, as Colin Wight has done at length, a sociological framework for IR,[110] one that embeds the inter-state within the inter-national and both within wider and more complex social relations. Secondly, anarchist thought might also be a source of political insight and a spur for political imagination. This will likely revolve around critiques of and assistance to those who can only see social or political change and innovation through state-like lenses.[111] Third, anarchist thought might also equip political and social theorists with a vocabulary for speaking truth to power. This would be to speak from a uniquely left-libertarian perspective, one largely forgotten but always necessary, unencumbered with the statist concerns of the traditional left, but intellectually equipped to provide a robust critique of neo-liberalism nonetheless. Fourth, in an age where statism is on the wane, anarchism can provide both a critique of the processes that bought it about and provide a set of conceptual and political tools to help us think through institutional responses to the coming changes. Finally, basic historical research is warranted, work that recovers the long-lost anarchist approach to world politics. It is clear that anarchism (and IR) was born in a quite different time and with quite different priorities to those of our own, but recovering the context and intentions of nineteenth century anarchists will help us reinvestigate and question the accepted meanings of such contemporary concepts as anarchy, anarchism and anarchist.

[109] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, pp. 51, 76.
[110] Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[111] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven, Conn.; Yale University Press, 1998).